DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 365 197 HE 026 988

AUTHOR	Bartlett, Lucy E.; Morgan, John A.
TITLE	Choosing the College Textbook: A Textbook Selection Checklist for Instructor Use. Curriculum and Program Planning.
PUB DATE	Jul 91
NOTE	44p.; Ed.D. Practicum, Nova University.
PUB TYPE	Dissertations/Theses - Practicum Papers (043) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Tests/Evaluation Instruments (160)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*College Curriculum; College Faculty; College Students; Computer Software; Higher Education; Readability; Student Attitudes; Teacher Attitudes; Textbook Content; Textbook Evaluation; *Textbook Selection
IDENTIFIERS	Brenau College GA; Textbook Design; Textbook Errors

ABSTRACT

This project developed a checklist for examining college texts for adoption in situations in which several instructors use the same text to teach a large introductory, multi-sectioned college course. Fifteen students from Brenau College (Georgia) and 33 faculty members from several Georgia colleges were interviewed. Four computer software dealers and a publisher were also interviewed concerning computer programs to estimate reading grade level of college textbooks. This information was combined with results of a review of the literature, and the checklist was developed and revised after review by the professors previously interviewed. Interviews suggested that most textbook choices are made by examining copies of the text and the ancillary materials that accompany them. Professors and students were found to have similar criteria for a "good" textbook. Instructors placed strong emphasis on readability and on ancillary materials. When two texts seemed equal, the one with stronger ancillary materials was usually selected. Professors were concerned about errors and overly technical language. Students were very concerned about textbook costs and liked texts that used plain, practical language with information broken into manageable chunks. Also included are the interview questions, feedback form, and the checklist itself. (Contains 42 references.) (JB)

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ED 365 197

CHOOSING THE COLLEGE TEXTBOOK
A TEXTBOOK SELECTION CHECKLIST
FOR INSTRUCTOR USE

Curriculum and Program Planning

by

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A Practicum presented to Nova University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education

Nova University

July, 1991

HE 026 988

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ABSTRACT

Textbooks at Brenau College usually are chosen by the full time faculty member who teaches the course in which the text will be used. At the introductory level, a few multi-sectioned courses are taught by more than one faculty member. These textbooks are chosen by the team of faculty members who teach the course.

Checklists for choosing textbooks that were available in the literature were not appropriate for use at Brenau. This project developed a checklist to be used in examining texts for adoption. Fifteen students and thirty-three faculty members were interviewed as to the criteria for a "good" text. Five computer software dealers were interviewed as to the use of readability formulas to determine the reading grade level of college textbooks. The information obtained in the interviews was tabulated with the limited information available in the literature, and the checklist was developed from this tabulation. The information was then evaluated by seven professors, and the checklist was revised according to their suggestions. The checklist is now available for the voluntary use of the Brenau College Faculty.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Brenau is an independent academic institution with three divisions: The Academy, The Women's College, and The Professional College. The Academy is a residential high school program for young women. The Women's College offers a residential program and is predominantly designed for the traditional female student aged 18-22. Both The Academy and The Women's College are housed on the main campus in Gainesville, Georgia. The Professional College is designed to meet the needs of the non-traditional student and offers undergraduate and graduate programs after 4:00 P.M. and on weekends on numerous campuses throughout North Georgia (Brenau Catalog, 1990-91).

Nature of the Problem

Brenau College professors spend a great deal of time choosing textbooks and are disappointed when their choices are poorly received or do not meet their needs. (Loebl-Crowder, 1990; Varnum, 1990; Southerland,1990.) Choosing a textbook is not only time consuming, but many professors do not have the training to make these choices in the most

timely, effective manner (Arnold, 1989). Ware (1991) stated "Textbook selection is a problem that can easily be pushed to the back burner." Coltrane (1991) stated, "Textbook selection must be a priority of department chairs, and they must be constantly diligent that textbooks are regularly reviewed and updated."

Textbooks for the college classes at Brenau range from extremely simple to extremely difficult, from poorly organized to consistently, clearly organized. Last year they included a methods manual that predominately covered how not to teach reading (Range 1991), a sophomore level history course with a text "suitable for Ph.D. candidates in anthropology" (Southerland, 1990), and a freshman humanities text so difficult that students could not understand it when it was read to them (Yarbourgh, 1990; Duggar, 1990; Illges, 1990). Conversely, there were texts that met the commonly accepted criteria as "good" textbooks (McKeachie, 1986; Griffin, 1984; Bell, 1982; Ezzard, 1990). They were written at reading levels that challenged students without frustrating them (Bartlett, 1989-1990). They contained excellent introductions and summaries of each chapter. Some defined discipline-related vocabulary on the page it first appeared as well as in the glossary. Others provided questions or practice at appropriate intervals to maximize learning (Bartlett, 1989-1990).

In the off-campus programs, the adjunct professors use the textbook chosen by the full time professor (Ware, 1991).

If the adjunct professor does not like the chosen text, he/she must teach from it anyway (Childers,1991).

Research Questions

What criteria should be included in a textbook selection checklist? Would use of a computerized readability formula improve textbook selection?

Significance to the Institution

The development of a standard textbook selection guide can assist professors in decisions on which textbook best presents the material and the discipline related vocabulary at an appropriate reading level. It could provide a tool for communication between professors who work on different campuses and provide in-service training to faculty who desire more knowledge of the textbook selection process.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to interview college professors and Brenau College students and to develop a checklist to evaluate college textbooks based on the interviews and on the criteria for textbook selection found in the literature. This checklist will be used by Brenau College professors to select textbooks that will satisfy both the needs of the college professors, the adjunct professors, and the students. A second purpose of the study was to evaluate computer software which gave a reading grade level of textbooks based on a readability formula.

Relationship to the Seminar

Since the textbook is a major contributor to the total curriculum, careful consideration of textbook choice is essential. McKeachie (1986: 12) stated "research on teaching suggests that the major influence on what students learn is not the teaching method but the textbook." This practicum project, therefore, relates to the seminar, Curriculum and Program Planning.

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Three objectives were pursued in the literature search. First, did a checklist for selecting college textbooks that would meet the needs of Brenau College already exist? Second, if not, what information was available that would allow a valid and reliable checklist to be constructed? Third, would computer assisted readability formulas help Brenau professors choose more readable textbooks?

A computer search of the ERIC files from 1983 through 1990, revealed eighty-five documents and journal articles on this topic. Three of these dealt with the general selection of textbooks. The most informative articles reviewed are a resource manual from the State University of New York, Albany, (Reading in Post-Secondary Occupational Education, 1981), a paper by Cleare (1983) in a collection published by the New York State Association of Two-Year Colleges, Inc., and a paper by Griffin (1984). Many others dealt with the selection of texts in specific disciplines. Of these, Reitenour's Nova University practicum, A Comparison Study of Five Music Appreciation Textbooks (1984), contained a checklist by Crumby and Copeland on the general selection of

textbooks. A small paperback book in the Fastback Series from Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation by Young and Riegeluth (1988) provided concise but comprehensive material for choosing textbooks at the elementary and secondary levels. No current studies appropriate to Brenau's needs have been located, but the above listed articles contained material that was helpful in developing a checklist for use at Brenau College.

Several articles stressed the need for more informed textbook selection. Arnold (1989: 5) stated that we do not know how faculty evaluates textbooks. Griffin (1984: 4) stated instructors

> come to a department meeting scheduled for the express purpose of selecting texts to be used . . . without even having bothered to look at the books at all!"

She believed that an instrument to evaluate textbooks should ensure that texts are perused. She stated "most content area texts . . . are often chosen for all the wrong reasons or for no viable reasons at all" (Griffin, 1984 :5).

A few documents dealt exclusively with assigning grade levels to books by using readability formulas. Most authors cautioned against the overuse of readability formulas. Durkin (1989) cautioned that all readability formulas calculate grade levels by the number of longer or uncommon words and by sentence length. They do not measure coherence, complexity of ideas and the pace of their presentation, prior knowledge of the reader, number of items to be

remembered, treatment of new words, cohesiveness, or the need for inferences. Irwin (1980) stated that many critical factors cannot be taken into account in the readability formulas. She was particularly concerned that they do not match the conceptual backgrounds of the reader and the concept load of the text. Bell (1982) noted that readability formulas cannot measure interest, and that often one can read a much more difficult book when the interest level is high. Griffin (1984: 5) stated,

> Many college instructors do attribute tremendous value to reading level, but usually know practically nothing about how it is determined or how very misleading, reading level can be - a little knowledge is a dangerous thing.

Harris (1970) stated the Dale-Chall Formula is in highest favor of those formulas appropriate for middle and upper grades. The Dale-Chall Formula uses the uncommon word approach to determining difficult words. Three thousand words, proper nouns, and proper adjectives compose the list of common words. All other words are considered uncommon words (Rainwater, 1978). This formula's estimate of reading grade level based on an uncommon word list may be misleading because discipline-related vocabulary which has been mastered will still count as a difficult word (Reading in Postsecondary Occupational Education, 1981). Because the Dale-Chall formula is very time consuming to administer manually, readability formulas based on sentence length and the number of syllables in a one-hundred word sample . . .have become more popular (Durkin, 1989).

Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

The following procedures were used in developing this checklist for textbook selection. First, an extensive search of the literature was conducted using the Psychinfo Abstracts, Sociological Abstracts, and Books in Print as recommended by The Nova University Retrieval Service. The search of ERIC was updated to include materials from January 1991 until April 1991.

The second procedural step involved interviewing students from Brenau College and professors from Brenau College, Gainesville College, North Georgia College, and Lanier Technical Institute. Interviews were chosen to gather data as Tuckman (1988) stated that they generate more information: people find it easier to talk than to write. Interviews were conducted with fifteen students and thirty-three faculty members. Due to the qualitative nature of the study, interviews were not done on a random sample (McMillan and Schumacher, 1989).

Fifteen students from Brenau College were interviewed. In The Professional College of Brenau, four graduate students were interviewed; from The Women's College three

seniors, seven juniors, and one freshman were interviewed. Twenty-one undergraduates declined the request to be interviewed citing the pressure of upcoming graduation and the busy schedule of spring quarter.

Professors to be interviewed were chosen to represent those in positions of leadership. At Brenau, heads of departments, heads of divisions, and professors who had been named by interviewed students as having "the best textbook they had ever used" were interviewed. No more than three in any division were interviewed in order to provide information across the disciplines. At North Georgia College and Gainesville College, faculty with the most experience who teach comparable courses to those interviewed at Brenau were interviewed. Twenty faculty members from Brenau, five from Gainesville College, and three from North Georgia College were interviewed in order to compare the techniques of Brenau professors with to those of public college faculties.

In the literature, a major article with three checklists dealt with textbook selection in technical schools (Reading in Postsecondary Occupational Education, 1981); therefore, six instructors at Lanier Technical Institute were interviewed to compare their selection methods and textbook needs to the selection methods and textbook needs at the three colleges in the study.

In the next step, four software retailers and one publisher were interviewed in regard to computer programs that would estimate the reading grade level of textbooks.

Information was requested as to which readability formulas were used by the programs and the suitability of the program for estimating the reading level of college textbooks.

Next, information obtained in the interviews was tabulated by the researcher to determine the most commonly mentioned criteria. Using this tabulation a rough draft of the checklist was prepared. Items were included in the checklist in the areas of Subject Matter Content, Readability, and Instructional Design if they had been mentioned at least five times in the literature and/or the interviews. Items listed under Social Content and Production Quality were listed if they were mentioned twice.

In the next procedural step, feedback on the rough draft of the checklist was requested from professors previously interviewed. Seven professors were asked to review the checklist and evaluate it. The checklist was modified based on their feedback.

As the last procedural step, the finished document was presented to the Vice-President for Academic Affairs and the Dean of the Professional College for voluntary, trial use by the faculty at Brenau College.

Beyond the scope of this practicum, in the spring of 1992, a random sampling of faculty will be interviewed as to the usefulness of the document. Any further necessary changes will be made at that time.

Chapter 4

RESULTS

The Nova University Retrieval Service completed searches of the Psychinfo Abstract and the Sociological Abstract and searched the ERIC abstracts from December 1990 until April 1991. These searches located no additional journal articles or documents that dealt with the general criteria for selecting textbooks. The Retrieval Service located the book Fastback 275: Improving the Textbook Selection Process by Young and Riegeluth (1988) that provided concise but comprehensive material for choosing textbooks at the elementary and secondary levels. This book provided material for the divisions of the checklist. These divisions were similar to the divisions used in the other literature studied during the writing of the proposal but were clearer, shorter,. and easier to understand.

During the Spring Quarter of 1991, forty-three interviews were conducted in person with one interviewee at a time. Interviews were from twenty minutes to one and one half hours long. Five persons asked to fill out the forms privately and return them instead of completing the interview in person.

The interviews were conducted using open-ended questions. (See Appendix B.) The questions were drawn from the strands that ran through the literature, and most were straight forward. The two exceptions were included to elicit information that might not have been available otherwise. The question: "On what do you rely for preliminary information on textbooks?" was included to discover if professors actually examine textbooks before adoption. The question: "What irritates you most about the textbooks available in your discipline?" was asked to elicit any previously hidden emotions that might influence textbook selection.

No professor interviewed used a readability formula of any type in the examination of a textbook. Most said they knew from experience the level their students could handle. One division head, new to the field of college teaching, expressed a need for more help. Some stated that often they found out that a book was too hard or too easy the first quarter they used it. Cleary (1991) stated that she intends to ask students to evaluate the textbook as they evaluate the faculty on the end of quarter evaluations.

The study of the computerized readability formulas was conducted to determine if the professors could profitably use a readability formula as they attempted to decide if a textbook was too hard or too easy. Dalzell of Que Software stated that their program Right Writer uses the Fog Index, the Flesch and the Flesch Kincaid Formulas, all of which are

based on length of sentences and length of words in a selection of one hundred word. The instructions included with Grammatik from Reference Software stated that Grammatik uses the Flesch Formula. LeClair of Leclair Educational Software Systems (1991) did not recommend Right Writer and Grammatik. She stated that they gave very limited information.

LeClair (1991) did recommend the software program Readability from Micro Power and Light. This program gave nine different readability formulas including the Dale-Chall, the preferred formula for this level of book (Harris 1970). By marking discipline-related vocabulary as a common word the program became more accurate. However, the instructional documentation for Readability was inadequate, and the program out-of-date. It was more rapid than figuring the grade level manually using any of the available formulas.

Next, the results of the interviews were tabulated. In the tabulations, the divisions (Subject Matter Content, Social Content, Readability, Instructional Design, and Production Quality) used by Young and Riegeluth (1988) were used. These were similar to the divisions used in the other literature but were clearer, shorter, and easier to understand. Specific items from Young and Riegeluth (1988), from the material in the three checklists from Reading in Post-secondary Occupational Education (1981), from Griffin (1984), and from Crumbly and Copeland as quoted in Reitenour

(1984) were then tabulated. Specific items were then tabulated from the interviews. Items in Subject Matter Content, Readability, and Instructional Design were included in the checklist if they had been mentioned at least five times in the literature and/or the interviews. Items listed under Social Content and Production Quality were listed if they were mentioned twice. For the draft of the checklist, the writer used the items from the tabulations that met the criteria. (See Table One).

Table One

Tabulation of Items

in Interviews and

in Literature

Items	Interviews	Literature
Subject matter content		
Does content match course objectives?	18	5
Is material accurate?	7	2
Current?	9	2
Well-documented?	5	0
Is the topic treated at the proper depth for the course in which it will be used?	5	0
Will deficiencies in text require a large number of handouts?	6	1
Will this be a good reference book for the student for future years?	5	1
Social content		
Does it reinforce the values in the core curriculum?	1	0
Is treatment unbiased to:		
race	0	4
ethnic groups	0	4
socioeconomic groups	0	2
sex	1	5

Table One (cont.)

Items	Interviews	Literature
Instructional Design		
Is text congruent with teacher's style, approach, and orientation?	12	3
Does text give adequate introductory materials?	17	4
Give explanatory notes?	5	0
Use adequate summaries?	6	4
Use chapter subheadings?	7	4
Is text well sequenced?	5	0
Is practice provided at appropriate intervals?	20	6
In adequate amounts?	20	6
Does the author tie theory to relevant work and life experiences?	21	4
Is new learning integrated and related to previous learning?	5	1
Does text provide systematic review?	4	3
Does text emphasize the cognitive level of learning required by the syllabus?	5	2
Is the text interesting?	10	4
Humorous?	5	0
Thought-provoking?	6	1
Does it provide concept diagrams?	8	6
Visual displays?	12	6
Cartoons?	5	3
Thorough index?	5	6
Table of contents?	4	5
Are discipline-related vocabulary words defined in context?	15	4
Defined in the margin on page where first introduced?	9	0
Defined at the beginning or end of the chapter?	5	1
Defined in a glossary at the end of the text?	7	6
Are the ancillary materials adequate?	25	2
Overhead transparencies?	6	2
Audio visuals?	3	2
Computer Software?	5	0
Useful test bank?	10	0
Helpful instructor's manual?	5	4
References?	2	4
Lab Manuals/Workbooks	5	1

Table One (cont.)

Items	Interviews	Literature
Readability		
Is it appropriate at a level the student understands		
Culturally?	12	2
Based on prior knowledge?	12	4
Language facility?	18	3
Do ideas have a logical relationship and flow?	11	6
Is material well-organized with a clear focus?	17	6
Is writing clear, concise, and coherent?	17	6
Have students tried this book?	5	1
Production Quality		
Is the book sturdy without being too heavy?	3	2
Does text appropriately use color?	2	1
Vivid, active,relevant visuals?	12	5
Adequate white space?	3	1
Marginal notes?	2	0
Easy to read print?	3	2
Non-glare paper?	2	1

The interviews suggested that most textbook choices were made by examining copies of the text and the ancillary materials that accompany them. Varnum (1991) reports, "Sight unseen books are disasters!" Southerland (1991) agrees. Professors all rely heavily on textbook representatives, catalogs and fliers, colleagues' advice, and the reputation of the publisher and/or author to decide which books to examine.

Professors and students interviewed had very similar criteria for a "good" textbook. Instructors placed strong emphasis on readability, and on the ancillary materials that came with a textbook. When two books were perceived to

be nearly equal, the book with the stronger ancillary materials will be chosen. Professors particularly wanted good overhead transparencies. They would like applicable software and videos,as well as test banks that test above the knowledge level. Herman (1991) expressed concern over the ethics of choosing a text for one year just to get the ancillary materials and then choosing a different text the next year to build one's supply. She stated that others at conferences she has attended have stated that this was how they built their supply of ancillary materials. She stated that this is increasing the price of textbooks.

Most professors expressed concern over the rapidly increasing price of textbooks, but few allowed the price to stop them from choosing the text they felt was best. When they select a textbook, most do not know what the textbook price will be in the bookstore. None considered price to be a reason not to use more than one text, but most reported using only one for other reasons. Handouts were used to supplement the text, to provide study guides, to provide transitional information when the text is difficult, and to provide current material. Students reported that they liked handouts when the handouts were relevant to the course.

Faculty members were irritated by texts that contained numerous errors, both in substance and in answers to problems. They also disliked texts that were too technically written, and that appeared to be written to impress

colleagues with how much the author knew instead of to communicate to a particular level of student.

Students liked textbooks that used plain, practical language. They wanted clear, concise, well-focused material that was broken into "sizable chunks." Upchurch (1991) stated that she did not like too much technical information that was not relevant. She disliked chapters that have no focus and were "like a lecture in print." Combs (1991) stated, "A good reference book is not necessarily a good text." Most mentioned the need for good introductions and summaries in each chapter. In subjects that require practice of concepts, students wanted to practice after each new concept.

The students were very concerned about cost, and most undergraduates reported that they sell back most of their books. Several students reported that they had later regretted selling certain books, particularly books in their majors.

The students reported that they learned from pictures, diagrams, charts, and tables. They liked discipline-related vocabulary identified in heavy type, the word defined by an appositive the first time it was used, and a good glossary. They appreciated books that also defined new vocabulary in the margin on the first page where it was introduced. Kelly (1991) agreed with the students on the importance of glossary material. He stated, "A page glossary of words is better at the top of the page than at the bottom."

Several professors expressed unique ideas for discovering if the text was appropriate to their students. Camp and Borland (1991) had every text they considered rated by students who have not yet had the course the text covers. Broadhurst (1991) had independent-study students review possible texts. Giberson (1991) stated she plans to have a work study student examine possible textbook choices. Herman (1991) assigned readings from possible textbook choices that were placed on reserve in the library. Greavu (1991), with permission, used exercises from examination copies as classroom exercises. Andrews (1991) recommended asking the textbook company representative what other colleges in the area use the textbook under consideration. He then recommended that one get feedback from students who have used the textbook at these other colleges.

On the rough draft of the checklist, feedback was requested from seven professors on the following questions: Are any statements unclear? If so, which ones? Do you feel any of the statements are unnecessary? Which ones? Does anything need to be added? If so what? Would it be easier to use if the checklist was double spaced? Would this be a helpful checklist for you as you choose a new text? (See Appendix C.) All returned the checklist.

No professors found any statements unclear. Their comments on which statements were unnecessary, needed to be combined, changed, or added is presented in Table Two.

Table Two

Suggested Modifications in Checklist

1.	State in measurable terms	2
2.	Omit Social Content Section	3
3.	Omit cognitive-level-of-learning item	2
4.	Omit positive-tone item	2
5.	Emphasize Ancillary Materials	5
6.	Combine questions about amount and frequency of practice	2
7.	Add item relating to cost	3
8.	Leave more space for professor's notes	1

The interviews and literature checklists were again scrutinized. The items were omitted, combined, or added as requested in the feedback from the professors and the reevaluation of the material from the literature study. The completed checklist is Appendix A.

Three professors stated that the checklist would be useful to them personally. One stated that perhaps it would be useful. The fifth stated that it would be useful when having students evaluate prospective texts. One stated she already used all these criteria when choosing a text, and the seventh did not answer this question.

The finished document was presented to the Vice-President for Academic Affairs and to the Dean of the Professional College for the voluntary use of department chairs and faculty.

Chapter 5

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This textbook selection checklist provides Brenau College faculty with a tool to use on a voluntary basis in choosing textbooks. Professors may make effective choices in less time than the process previously required.

Discussion

The Nova Retrieval Service located no general textbook selection checklists published since 1983 that were are designed for four year colleges. There were numerous studies for choosing textbooks in specific disciplines, but these studies related almost exclusively to subject matter content. They neglected readability, instructional design, and production quality. The general guides published since 1983 were designed for public schools, two-year community colleges, and technical post-secondary schools.

As professors were interviewed in the second procedural step, several stated that they had never considered how they chose textbooks. Zapf (1991) stated, "I didn't think I had any criteria for choosing textbooks, but after talking to

you, I guess I do." Yamilkoski (1991) stated that the checklist could make professors more aware of the importance of careful examination of a textbook before selecting it for use. He stated that textbook selection would be improved if faculty used all items on the checklist. Chairman of the Education Department William Ware (1991) stated that the Education Department has formed a committee that will regularly review the textbooks in the Education Department.

Interview information from the professors at Gainesville College and at North Georgia College, both parts of the University of Georgia system, was consistent with the information from Brenau professors. Interview information from instructors at Lanier Technical Institute varied slightly from the information from Brenau faculty members, but not enough to reduce the value of the recommendations in the checklists in Reading in Postsecondary Occupational Education (1981) which were designed for postsecondary technical schools not for colleges. Variations in the information from Lanier Technical Institute instructors were primarily in difficulty of obtaining examination copies, the need for affordable books, and the awareness of the difficulty level of the textbooks.

The five interview forms that were filled out privately did not provide as much information as the personal interviews. There was sufficient information in them, however, that they remained a valuable part of the study.

When several books adequately cover the material included in the course objectives, professors next look at the adequacy of ancillary materials. Professors whose disciplines require practice problems evaluated the amount of practice and the frequency of practice very carefully. Many looked for books where the author tied theory to relevant work and life experiences. Professors and students wanted well-organized material with a clear focus, and they wanted clear, concise, coherent writing on a level the student understands.

Conclusions

The lack of student response was the most limiting part of the study. Seniors expressed that they were nearing graduation, and improvement in textbook selection would not help them. Others cited busy spring quarter schedules as their reason for refusing the request for an interview. With only fifteen responses, student information did not provide the insight that more student interviews might have provided.

This researcher decided not to include any mention of readability formulas in the checklist. Computer checks by Right Writer and Grammatik provided limited information and Readability was out-of-date. The literature cautioned that a readability formula does not give a true picture of the readability of a textbook. This was confirmed as textbooks identified as extremely difficult by both students and professors and textbooks identified as extremely easy, all

scored at a graduate level on the readability formulas. In the interviews, no professor mentioned readability formulas, and professors who reviewed the draft of the checklist preferred to have textbooks evaluated by students rather than use a readability formula.

The textbook checklist is rather long. In order to completely cover the topics stressed in both the literature and the interviews all these items were deemed necessary. As the checklist is used, perhaps it can be simplified and shortened. Also, as it is used, changes may need to be made to adjust it more to a Likert Scale with fewer dichotomous statements.

Implications and Recommendations

If department chairs wish, this checklist can provide a method for adjunct professors who regularly teach for Brenau to have some input into the textbook selection process. It is recommended that it be used in multi-sectioned courses to provide a tool for communication as to the strengths and weaknesses of the texts being considered. Department chairs may use it to insure that professors closely examine texts before adopting them for classes.

Faculty should be briefed on this study and the use of the textbook selection checklist. In-service training on textbook selection is needed. As expensive as textbooks have become and as important as they are in the learning process, careful selection of the appropriate textbook is

essential. Policies on textbook selection need to be clearly stated so, as Ware (1991) states, textbook selection is not "pushed to the back burner."

Cleary's idea (1991) of including an evaluation of the textbook(s) as a part of the student's evaluation of the professors should be implemented. This information should then be used by department chairs to provide leadership in improving textbook selection.

Textbook selection can be improved as people become more aware of the characteristics of effective textbooks. For the newly hired faculty member, this textbook selection checklist provides guidelines that were not previously available at Brenau. For the experienced professor, it can provide a way to assist others and to revitalize his/her own textbook selection process.

More careful selection of textbooks can enhance student learning and make teaching easier for faculty. Careful examination of prospective texts is essential to the increased efficiency of today's colleges.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

TEXTBOOK SELECTION CHECKLIST

Checklist for Textbook Selection

Not all of these criteria will be helpful to your discipline, but since this is a general check list, please use what is helpful and ignore the rest. Departments may wish professors to rate texts as 1 (Inadequate), 2 (Poor), 3 (Barely Adequate), 4 (Very good), 5 (Excellent).

Preliminary search: Helpful sources to lead to examination copies - Textbook company representatives, colleagues, catalogs and fliers, conference exhibits, author and company reputation, Books in Print, librarians.

1. Subject matter content
   A. Does content match the course objectives? _____
   B. Is material accurate?_____Current?_____ Well-docoumented?_____
   C. Is the topic treated at the proper depth for the course in which it will be used? _____
   D. Will deficiencies in the text require handouts each chapter?_____ Regularly? _____Occasionally? _____ Rarely? _____ For updating?_____
   E. Will this be a good reference book for the student for future years? _____

2.. Readability
   A. Is it appropriate at a level students understand
      1) Culturally? ____
      2) Based on expected prior knowledge? ____
      3) Based on language proficiency? ____
   B. Do ideas have a logical relationship and flow? _____
   C. Is the material well-organized with a clear focus?___
   D. Is writing clear, concise, and coherent? _____
   E. Have students tried this book?_____ (Possible ways to get student feedback:)
      1) place on reading list with report to include evaluation of book,
      2) evaluation by work-study student
      3) evaluation by independent-study student,
      4) selections used as handouts (with permission)
      5) get names of other professors using the text; check with these students.

Checklist for Textbook Selection (Cont.)

3. Instructional Design
   A. Is text congruent with teacher's style, approach, and orientation? _____
   B. Does text give adequate introductory materials? ___ Explanatory notes?_____ Summaries? _____ Chapter Sub-headings? _____
   C. Is text well sequenced? _____
   D. Are adequate examples and practice provided at appropriate intervals? _____ (Most students state they need examples or practice after one or two basic concepts are presented.)
   E. Does the author tie theory to relevant work and life experiences? _____
   F. Is new learning integrated and related to previous learning? ___
   G. Does text provide systematic review? _____ End-of-Chapter Questions?_____
   H. Does text emphasize the cognitive level of learning required by the syllabus? _____
   I. Is the text interesting? _____, Humorous? _____, Thought-provoking?_____
   J. Does it provide concept diagrams? _____, Visual displays?_____Tables?_____ Cartoons?_____ Thorough index?_____ Table of Contents? _____
   K. Are discipline-related vocabulary words treated in heavy type and defined in context?_____ Defined in the margin on page where first introduced? _____ Defined at the beginning or end of the chapter?_____ Defined in a glossary at the end of the text?____

4. Are the ancillary materials adequate?_____ Overhead transparencies?_____ Audio- Visuals?_____ Computer Software?_____ Useful test bank?_____ Helpful teacher's manual?_____

5. Production Quality
   A. Is the book durable without being too heavy?_____
   B. Does text appropriately use highlighting? ___ Color?___ Different typefaces?_____ Vivid, active, relevant visuals?_____ Adequate white space? _____ Marginal notes?_____ Easy to read print?_____ Non-glare print?____

6. Is this text worth the cost? _____

Prepared by Lucy Bartlett, Brenau Learning Center, 1991.

APPENDIX B

QUESTIONS FOR INTERVIEWS

QUESTIONS FOR PROFESSORS

TEXTBOOK SELECTION

1. Are your textbooks chosen by you alone or by a group with whom you share responsibility for multi-section classes?

2. On what do you rely for preliminary information on textbooks? (textbook company representatives, catalogs, reputation of author, teachers' lounge conversation, exhibits at conferences, examination copies, pre-publication copies, other)

3. After you have found several textbooks that adequately cover the material you teach in the course for which the textbook will be used, how do you choose between them?

4. Is price a consideration in textbook choice? If so, at what price is a book too expensive?

5. Do you use more than one textbook in a course? Does total price influence this decision? If books were cheaper, would you use more than one book?

6. Do you use a large number of handouts to supplement texts? Why or why not?

7. What irritates you most about the textbooks available in your discipline?

8. If your discipline requires practical exercises, lab exercises, or other types of application, how do you decide that a textbook provides adequate practice at appropriate intervals?

9. Are teachers' manuals, student workbooks, lab books, software, and/or prepared tests a concern as you choose a textbook? If so, are these adequate when the text is adequate?

10. How do you decide if a text is too difficult or too easy?

Any other comments?

QUESTIONS FOR STUDENTS
TEXTBOOK SELECTION

1. What is the best textbook you have had in college? What made it the best? (Name more than one if appropriate.)

2. What is the worst textbook you have had in college? What made it the worst?

3. What organizational details help you as you learn from a textbook?

4. How many words per page can you need to look up in the dictionary without losing the meaning of the text and/or becoming frustrated?

5. In a course that requires application like a math text or a science text, how many new ideas can you assimilate before practicing them?

6. In the course(s) where you have learned the most, what percent of your learning came from the textbook? Why?

7. In the course(s) where you have learned the least, what percent of your learning came form the textbook? Why?

8. Does it bother you if the instructor skips around when assigning the readings from the text(s)? If material is omitted, do you read it anyway? Why?

9. How do you feel when the professor uses lots of hand outs?

10. How much are you willing to spend for a textbook that you will keep for your own library? If you had a buyer, how often would you sell a textbook when you are done with it?

APPENDIX C

FEEDBACK FORM

May 23, 1991

Dear Professors:

Could you please look at the enclosed textbook selection checklist and give me some feedback as to how I may improve it. I know this is a busy time of year for you, and I appreciate your help. If you are unable to review this, please call me at 534-4860 and I'll ask someone else. I would really appreciate your input.

Are any statements unclear? If so, which ones?

Do you feel any of the statements are unnecessary? Which ones?

Has anything been omitted that needs to be included?

Would it be easier to use if it were double spaced?

Would this be a helpful checklist for you as you choose a new text?

When you have finished, please return through campus mail to Lucy Bartlett, Learning Center.

Thank you!

Lucy Bartlett